

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A communications system comprising:
a plurality of servers connected together in
a network for processing a plurality of different job
types having respective different resource usage
characteristics associated therewith;

each server determining a respective health
metric thereof based upon at least one job being
processed thereby and weighting the health metric based
upon the respective resource usage characteristic of
the at least one job; and

a dispatcher for collecting the weighted
health metrics from said servers and distributing jobs
to said servers based thereon.

2. The communications system of Claim 1
wherein the resource usage characteristics comprise at
least one processing utilization characteristic and at
least one input/output utilization characteristic.

3. The communications system of Claim 1
further comprising a knowledge base for cooperating
with said dispatcher for storing the weighted health
metrics.

4. The communications system of Claim 1
wherein said servers map the weighted health metrics
for different resource usage characteristics to a
common scale.

5. The communications system of Claim 1
wherein said servers provide completed job results to

said dispatcher, and wherein the weighted health metrics are provided to said dispatcher with the completed job results.

6. The communications system of Claim 5 further comprising at least one load generator for generating the jobs for said servers and communicating the jobs to said dispatcher; and wherein said dispatcher further provides the completed job results to said at least one load generator.

7. The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said dispatcher periodically polls said servers for the weighted health metrics.

8. The communications system of Claim 1 wherein the jobs relate to electronic mail (e-mail) processing.

9. A load distributor for a plurality of servers connected together in a network for processing a plurality of different job types having respective different resource usage characteristics associated therewith, and each server determining a respective health metric thereof based upon at least one job being processed thereby and weighting the health metric based upon the respective resource usage characteristic of the at least one job, the load distributor comprising:

a dispatcher for collecting the weighted health metrics from the servers and distributing jobs to the servers based thereon; and

a knowledge base for cooperating with said dispatcher for storing the weighted health metrics.

10. The load distributor of Claim 9 wherein the resource usage characteristics comprise at least one processing utilization characteristic and at least one input/output utilization characteristic.

11. The load distributor of Claim 9 wherein the servers map the weighted health metrics for different resource usage characteristics to a common scale.

12. The load distributor of Claim 9 wherein the servers provide completed job results to said dispatcher module, and wherein the weighted health metrics are provided to said dispatcher with the completed job results.

13. The load distributor of Claim 9 wherein said dispatcher periodically polls the servers for the weighted health metrics.

14. A job distribution method for a plurality of servers connected together in a network, the servers for processing a plurality of different job types having respective different resource usage characteristics associated therewith, the method comprising:

determining a respective health metric of each server based upon at least one job being processed thereby and weighting the health metric based upon the respective resource usage characteristic of the at least one job; and

distributing jobs to the servers based upon the weighted health metrics.

15. The method of Claim 14 wherein the resource usage characteristics comprise at least one processing utilization characteristic and at least one input/output utilization characteristic.

16. The method of Claim 14 further comprising mapping the weighted health metrics for different resource usage characteristics to a common scale; and wherein distributing jobs to the servers comprises distributing the jobs based upon the commonly scaled weighted health metrics.

17. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for distributing jobs to a plurality of servers connected together in a network for processing a plurality of different job types having respective different resource usage characteristics associated therewith, and each server determining a respective health metric thereof based upon at least one job being processed thereby and weighting the health metric based upon the respective resource usage characteristic of the at least one job, the load distributor comprising:

a dispatcher module for collecting the weighted health metrics from the servers and distributing jobs to the servers based thereon; and

a knowledge base module for cooperating with said dispatcher module to store the weighted health metrics.

18. The computer-readable medium of Claim 17 wherein the resource usage characteristics comprise at least one processing utilization characteristic and at least one input/output utilization characteristic.

19. The computer-readable medium of Claim 17 wherein the servers map the weighted health metrics for different resource usage characteristics to a common scale.

20. The computer-readable medium of Claim 17 wherein the servers provide completed job results to said dispatcher module, and wherein the weighted health metrics are provided to said dispatcher module with the completed job results.

21. The computer-readable medium of Claim 17 wherein said dispatcher module periodically polls the servers for the weighted health metrics.